

**Statement of Commissioner William C. Ostendorff**  
**U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission**  
**Before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works**  
**Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Safety**

**May 5, 2010**

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee for this opportunity to appear before you with my fellow Commissioners today. The NRC's licensing and oversight activities are indeed important matters for our Nation. I applaud the Committee's objective to discuss the NRC's core principles of good regulation and how the NRC is meeting these principles in licensing new reactors and oversight processes of the current nuclear fleet.

I have been a Commissioner for just over one month. In that time, I have had the pleasure to meet with many NRC staff at Headquarters in Rockville; at Region 1 in King of Prussia, PA; at Region 2 in Atlanta; and at the Technical Training Center in Chattanooga. Since I am a newcomer to the commercial industry, I have made the effort to learn by visiting several regulated facilities. These visits included two operating power reactors, Watts Bar Unit 1 in Tennessee and Hope Creek in New Jersey, a power reactor under construction at Watts Bar, a research reactor at the University of Rhode Island, a blood irradiator facility in Rhode Island, and a commercial irradiator in New Jersey. Let me share with you some of my initial impressions from the past month.

From what I have observed, I believe that the NRC's principles of good regulation – *independence, openness, efficiency, clarity, and reliability* – are being followed by the agency. Nevertheless, I believe it is necessary to avoid complacency and to continuously improve the NRC's safety and security programs, where appropriate, and with these principles in mind.

I have been very impressed with the NRC staff. The resident inspectors, project managers, technical reviewers, operator license examiners, and managers I have met have demonstrated high levels of competence, enthusiasm, and commitment to the NRC's mission. I have also observed a very open and collaborative work environment for thoughtfully taking lessons learned and using them to improve the agency. It is evident that the NRC invests in its people and I now have a better appreciation for why the NRC has been ranked as the best place to work in the federal government by an external survey. It is an honor to be part of the NRC team.

With over 31 years of federal service, I have observed up close how the federal government does business. In reflecting on my military service, my experiences with the House Armed Services Committee and the National Nuclear Security Administration, my initial impression is that the NRC is very open with how it performs its independent regulatory functions. In particular, I think the NRC goes through great lengths to make our documents publicly available, to listen to views of external stakeholders during meetings, and to communicate the basis of our activities to the public and other interested parties.

I would like to note how professionally the NRC team has worked to evolve its Reactor Oversight Process using stakeholder feedback and lessons learned to make it better. Therefore, I am confident that in a similar fashion, the NRC will capture feedback and lessons learned, including insights recently provided by the Bipartisan Policy Center, to improve the NRC's processes for licensing new reactors.

In closing, I again thank the Subcommittee for your continued support of the NRC's mission and the opportunity to appear today. I look forward to answering any questions you have.